

VZCZCXRO0599
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHDK #0817/01 0931423
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 031423Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4748
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAKAR 000817

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/24/11
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAGR](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [KISL](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: WADE'S CAMPAIGN PRIORITIES: THE TOWN WITHOUT A
HEART

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROY L. WHITAKER, FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) Old-timers claim populous and centrally-located Kaolack was once a beautiful, prosperous and charming city -- rather than a seasonally dust-choked or rain-sodden topographical smear on the road to somewhere else. With his Democratic Party of Senegal (PDS) fragmented locally into at least nine rival factions, President Wade is hard-pressed to keep the majority he won in previous elections. He wants to reinvigorate a depressed economy and win votes by constructing a new "Heart of Kaolack." End Summary.

SALT MINES UNDER A GOLDEN SUN

2. (C) An American who volunteered in Kaolack 20 years ago recalls prosperity, hospitality and tranquility. Few who visit today, though, can overlook the noise, poverty and overall sense of desperate ill-arrangement. Deputy Mayor Ousmane NDour bemoans a "dying city" with only two industries: a troubled peanut facility and salt farms that hire only a few locals. There were textile and gunny sack factories, but both are gone. Kaolack was once a West African and Sahel crossroads, a depot for goods from Guinea, Mali and as far away as Burkina Faso. Three boats a week plied the arm of the sea called the Saloum River to transship Sahel goods and peanuts or peanut oil from rich and extensive nearby fields. Now, says NDour, the "river" is silted up; the trains no longer run; poor rainfall has driven farmers south to the Casamance; the young have no jobs; and Dakar pays little attention. With 247 full-timers and 100 on contract, the mayoralty is Kaolack's top employer.

OPPOSITION STRONGHOLD

3. (C) Mata Sy, Senegal's only female Regional Council President, is a gruff, earthy woman with no intellectual pretensions and, apparently, a keen political talent. She tells us Wade offered her the prime ministry in 2001 to replace Moustapha Niasse, her party leader in the opposition Alliance des Forces de Progres. When she refused, she says, Wade came back with a counter-offer in 2003: become Minister of State with, if she wished, an official residence in nearby Kaffrine. When she declined that as well, she says Wade told Macky Sall, "if Mata Sy does not join us, I'll select people with financial means to go down there and snatch the region away from her."

4. (C) In fact, Mata Sy says, Wade's effort to hold Kaolack includes an ex-Minister of Construction, the President of the Kaolack Banque Credit Agricole, the ex-director of scholarships at the Education Ministry, the Parliamentary First Vice-President, and others with the means to try to unseat her. Some of these, she noted, were long-time PDS loyalists, but Wade's Kaolack strategy hinged on enlisting ex-Socialists. A side effect of this was to expand and intensify Kaolack's sometimes vicious intra-PDS rivalries.

5. (C) AFP deputy leader and Kaolack MP Madieyna Diouf, speculated to us that PDS fractionalization in his home town was the country's worst. Local Socialist Diocckel Gadiaga, sitting in the dark in his paint-peeled, party-out-of-power hovel-headquarters, claimed there are "nine PDS factions in the city and 20 in the region!" SUD-FM

reporter Pape NDiaye says that what has passed for PDS consensus after a recent visit by PM Macky Sall, "just delays the free-for-all (la pagaille)." Fearing inner PDS turmoil may be directed to PDS rivals, Democratic League (LD) local leader Mapate Ba recalls that Kaolack was one of the few towns touched by violence in the 2000 campaign. When then-opposition chief Wade was in town, Ba said, PDS youth trapped a government coalition leader, pummeled him, "trussed him like a goat," and threw him into a Peugeot. Hours later, Wade supposedly turned to the car owner to say, "you have a Socialist tied up in your back seat. Better take him to hospital."

WADE'S MONUMENTS VS REGIONAL TRADITION

16. (C) The LD's Mapate Ba is among those who think they can predict Kaolack's election outcome by crunching the numbrs: he computes that the PDS coalition won 2002local elections by 800 votes, that the LD with sevral

DAKAR 00000817 002 OF 003

thousand votes is now in opposition; so Wade will lose.

17. (C) Others are not sure it will work out that way, and believe the two forces most in play are opposition co-leader Moustapha Niasse's personal standing, versus Wade's willingness to rebuild parts of the city. The autonomous Kaolack branch of the Tidjane Brotherhood, which is active throughout West Africa including Nigeria, is dominated by two rival branches of the maraboutic Niasse family and the Niasse name is golden. Moustapha Niasse's links to this family are apparently only distant and tenuous, but he nonetheless has the name and benefits from it.

18. (C) To combat Niasse and dispel local disappointment with his performance, Wade intends to rebuild the Kaolack town center. One project would transform the disused railway station and a stretch of track into a commercial center and broad showpiece boulevard. A second would construct a new "Heart of Kaolack," which Deputy Mayor Ndiaye told us will also be a commercial center. The problem, Regional Council President Mata Sy told us, is that Wade never consulted locally, at least not with her, before starting construction, and few are really sure what the site will include. Mata Sy is clearly not well-disposed to the project, reports (a tad gleefully?) that one of the buildings has already collapsed, and predicts the project's "zinc roofs are going to launch into the sky in our next tornado." Fortunately, she adds, there will be few by-standers when that happens, since the site is relatively distant from the busier parts of the city.

WE SEE THE PEANUT ISSUE CLEARLY NOW

19. (C) In Dakar, both Socialist Party big-wigs and PDS parliamentary front-benchers will gladly discourse on the arcana of agricultural policy. In Kaolack, its adjunct city of Kaffrine and the village of MBirkelane midway between them, debate is much simpler. In local terms, the difference is that Socialists think farmers should continue to plant peanuts, with government support, while the PDS wants to replace peanuts with vegetables or Wade's crop-of-the-year, in turn maize, manioc, the local juice-fruit bissap, or now grapes.

110. (C) MBirkelane's PDS MP, Mamadou Diallo, strikes us as highly unusual, in that he seems to be often in his constituency. He joked with us, in fact, that "if you ask about me at Parliament, they'll say, 'who?'" He said peanuts, once the basic crop of all central Senegal, can no longer provide a living. Middlemen are offering prices below planting costs, and growers survive only by using peanut straw for animals. He encourages farmers to diversify, at least to millet, and to use water catchments or valleys to plant household vegetables. He has also had built a village generator to run a millet mill and is encouraging artisanal workshops.

111. (C) Kaffrine used to be tied closely to Kaolack, where it sent its peanuts to be pressed for oil. With introduction of small-scale presses, though, the oil is now produced locally and Kaffrine is rapidly turning away from Kaolack and becoming a dependency of the Mouride Brotherhood's dynamic capital of Touba. Kaffrine Deputy Mayor Malick Dia told us his city may be Senegal's poorest, and that, since it is built in a depression, it floods every year. The opposition coalition controls the town.

COMMENT

112. (C) Kaolack is Senegal's fourth largest urban center, after Dakar, Touba and Thies. With its PDS perhaps hopelessly divided, its vote appears up for grabs in the next election. It and neighboring Kaffrine suffer from deepening immiseration; the local peanut industry is in rapid decline; and there is no consensus as to whether to revivify or replace it. Dakar has not paid the region a great deal of attention, at least until recently, with President Wade's plan to rebuild the Kaolack city center. Even that relatively large-scale infrastructure development may suffer, though, since construction was undertaken without consultation with local political powers. End Comment

113. (SBU) This cable is the first of several examining the political balance in what the Senegalese call the "voter pools," or "bassins electoraux," the cities and Dakar slums where the next elections will be won or lost.

DAKAR 00000817 003 OF 003

JACKSON